

PARVULUS CONATUS. 10

THE 3

WHITE'S ROW
LECTURE,

(A LITTLE ENLARGED)

Delivered TUESDAY, *Nov. 23*, 1790.

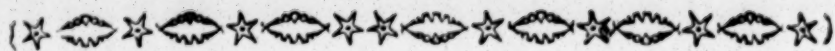
ON PORTSMOUTH COMMON.

By PETER EDWARDS. K.

J. parve Liber, impavidus, et, favente Deo, Superbos suo
a fastigio depelle; in Judicio mitesque Edoce; ac, ut
Christus in hominibus sanandis, omnia in omnibus fiat, Fac.

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LECTURE.

ROMANS VI. 1, 2.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in Sin, that Grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to Sin, live any longer therein?”

THE FIRST PART.

THERE is one thing in the text, which is observeable enough; and that is the objection that the Apostle brings in: and which is not peculiar to this place. I confess it is a matter of some wonderment to me, that commentators (to my observation) have not noticed it, though there is scarce any thing that shews more clearly the design of the writer, than the objections he introduces. I'll try to employ this in the text, so as to answer a good purpose (*spiritu ipso flante*) to the Children of God; after passing over the different parts of the text by way of familiar comment.

Rom. iii. 20.

What shall we say to these things?] This question calleth upon us to reason when we read, and to ponder when any one preaches, and to seek for a reply to what God reveals. Have we nothing to say when God speaks? It must needs be, that our attention was turned away, or our understanding was dark. It is not the great hearer, but the great thinker, that will become a learned Christian. And they will discern best between good and evil, who have their senses most exercised in these things. Some one said not amiss, that much reading makes a full man, much thinking makes a

Pf. cxix. 99.

Heb. v. 14.

correct man, and much writing makes a ready man. And the union of an obedient ear, with
 Prov. xxv. 12. a wise reprovcr, is the wise man's golden ornament. But to stretch out the hand for a whole
 Rom. x. 21, day, to a disobedient and gainsaying people, is a cold work to the preacher, and a criminal work to the hearers. So it was said to the shame of the Rulers, "I have told you already, but ye did not hear; wherefore will ye hear it again?" Nor could CHRIST shew the accusers of the woman a greater contempt, than by writing on the ground, when they addressed him as a Judge. And therefore St. Paul, much
 John ix. 27. wishing the improvement of Timothy, said, "meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, [*ἐν ταῖς ἱστορίαις*, *be thou in them*] for it is by *patience* and comfort of the Scriptures, that we have hope.

Rom. xv. 4. Eph. ii. *That Grace may abound.*] The grace of God
 Rom. xi. in bringing Salvation, is set in opposition to
 2 Tim. i. 9. human works. But when it lives, and moves
 Titus ii. 12. in the heart, it is the great producer of moral
 Heb. xii. 28. good. And sometimes the effect bears the name of the efficient. We take grace here, in
 2 Co. viii. 7. the first sense, as the objection cannot be formed against either of the other: for no one would say, "shall we continue in sin, that good fruits may abound?" And it must be in that sense, that it reigns through righteousness unto
 Rom. v. 22. eternal life.

Grace may abound.] The abounding of Grace is a fine thought, coming from *ab* and *undans*, out-flowing. So when this Grace justifies and sanctifies a sinner, it is said to be shed upon him abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our Saviour. And therefore the Scripture speaketh of it, as the pouring out of floods,—the flowing of a river—and the springing of a well. It is like the path of God, that drops fatness on the pastures of the wilderness, "and makes the little hills to rejoice on every side." This

is elegantly set forth in the Scriptures by the progression of numbers, so Isaiah, "he will multiply to pardon," so St. Peter, and Jude, "mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied;" and this the verb *πλεοναζω*, seems to import. As who should say, if two degrees of Grace will not keep you placid, and pious, he can give four, and raise them to eight, and go beyond all you can ask, and give more than you can think, and make his mercy to encompass you, and cover you, and keep you in on every side.

Is. lv. 7.

Margin.

Jude ii.

Ep. iii. 20.

Pf. xxxii. 10.

Pf. xxxiii. 22.

Shall we continue in Sin, that Grace may abound? No doubt the abounding of Grace is greatly to be wished: but has a continuance in sin any concern with the abounding of of grace? If it had, grace were no lovely thing. Nay, grace, or God's favour greatly abounds, where there is no sin; for how are Angels and glorified Spirits happy? And grace does not abound, where there is no want of sin; or how are Spirits in prison miserable? And even amongst men, some will drop into their graves with sin enough, but utter strangers to the abounding grace of God.

1 Tim. v. 21.

John viii. 21.

Yet certainly, when he who is as scarlet, is made white as snow; and he who is as crimson,

Is. i. 18.

becomes as wool, grace flows out in such a case as that. Yes, but it is when he, whose sins are as scarlet, is made white as snow! For there would be no appearance of grace abounding, if he were as scarlet still. 'Tis not the continuance, but the cure of sin, that sets off

Rom vi. 14.

the power of grace. For as the protraction of the disease, shewed the weakness of the physicians; and the presence of the strong man keeping his castle, made it evident, that the stronger was not yet come; so to St. Paul,

Mark v. 26.

when he was turned from being a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; the grace of our LORD was "exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

Luke xi. 21.

1 Tim. i. 13.

- God forbid.*] *μὴ γενοίτο*, Let it not be. St. Acts xx. 24. Paul did not shun suffering, nor flatter from death. But here he recoils from the detested thought, and turns away his face indignant : *talem terris avertite pestem*. We see then, according to the Apostle, that to continue in sin is a horrid thing : and that it has something so devilish and damnable in it, which cannot easily be depicted. While David continued in Mesech, he said, Woe is me ; and the leprosy of Naaman was a counterpoise to all his honours.
- Pf. cxx. 5 Who would continue in a burning fever, or take up his abode in a plague ? And yet, though the body be destroyed, the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord. But he who abides in sin, will feel it to revive,—and rise upon him ; and this *monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens*, will chain—and crush—and sting—and drown—and wrap him up in livid flame !——
- Pf. xxxviii. 3—4. Acts viii. 25 Pf. xl. 12 1 Cor. xv. 56 1 Tim. vi. 9 Pf. xi. 6 Is. xxxiii. 14 He therefore who continues in sin, should learn to dwell with everlasting burnings.
- How shall we.*] One cannot well overlook that fine frame of spirit, which the grace of God forms in men. How angelic it is ! For as Michael the Archangel durst not rail, when Satan was rude ; so this gracious frame of heart inclines 'em, when defamed to intreat, when persecuted to suffer it. It teaches them to abhor that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good." There is no outward restraint, or secular motive, that can act like this ; for this is connatural to them, and life in them ; which therefore in its actings is strong and regular. So "the fear of the LORD, is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." Thus an eminent worthy of old, avoided oppression and covetousness ; for he said, "but so did not I, because of the fear of God." A holy necessity is laid upon them to shun sin, for "they cannot sin, because they are born of God."
- Jude ix 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. Rom. xii. 9 Prov. xiv. 27 Neh. v. 17 1 John iii. 9

How shall we who are dead to sin ?] Between being dead to sin, and dead in sin, there is no small difference. The last denotes an undisturbed, and settled enjoyment in it, without a desire to forsake its pleasures, or an effort to force off its fetters : and this is the dark domain of all unregenerate men. But the first, when taken in a strict sense, implies no commerce with sin, enjoyment of it, or desire to it ; for death brings all these things to an end. Of the dead it is observed, “ their love and their hatred, and their envy, are now perished, neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.” So from being dead with CHRIST from the rudiments of the world, the Apostle infers “ touch not, taste not, handle not.” For as “ the woman that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth,” alive indeed to pleasure, but dead to God, having no commerce with him, enjoyment of him, or desire towards him : so the Saints are to reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

Eccles. ix. 6

Col. ii. 20-21

1 Tim. v. 6

Rom. vi. 11

How can we live any longer therein ?] He answereth the objection, by an argument taken from the opposition of things. *Dies est, ergo non nox.* “ Ye are all the children of the Light, and the children of the day : we are not of the night, nor of darkness.” When a child of the night carries on a commerce with sin, and finds enjoyment in it ; there is nothing unnatural or wonderful in all this : “ for his course is only that of all the children of disobedience : and they who are after the flesh, will always mind the things of the flesh.” But for a child of the day to continue in sin, in its fellowship, enjoyment, and desire, is perfectly unnatural, and impossible : since “ they who are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit.” For by the same grace, that forms them children, they

1 Th. v. 5

Eph. ii, 2-3

Rom. viii, 5

Rom. viii, 5

are

are made free from sin, and become servants of God, "and have their fruit unto holiness, and their end everlasting life."

Yet, the truth leads me to say; that the dead-
ness in this place, is to be so taken, as to agree
with the accounts given of the children of God,
in other parts of the word. While indeed
there is flesh lusting against the Spirit, inso-
much that what we wish is not done; and since
St. Paul complained, and some have fallen, and
all need more grace, and are yet to be wholly
sanctified, and must cleanse themselves from
all filthiness of flesh and spirit: we should not
lye against the truth, in speaking of the case
of a good man. But nevertheless, on the
whole of the matter, the preponderancy is
much on the side of the children of God,
the prevalence of Grace is greatly in their fa-
vour. As then, he, who says, "old wine is
better, will not straightway desire the new," nor
will any man cleave to that, which he loves
least of all, *trahit sua quemque voluptas*, and if
the children of Israel love idols, then after idols
they will go: so the children of God, with all
their infirmities, think God the highest good,
and CHRIST the most lovely, and his ways the
most pleasant, and his word the most sweet:
they choose the better part, and it shall not be
taken away from them. For if Barzillai would
not dwell at David's court, because he could
not taste what he ate, or what he drank, or hear
the voice of singing men, and singing women,
he being now dead to these things: what "fruit
has a child of God in those things whereof he
is now ashamed? for the end of those things
is death."

These things must needs be brought into the
account, for otherwise we should condemn the
generation of the Righteous; since all feel such
resistances in a life of faith. Yet on the other
hand, it ought to be considered, whether the
existence

existence of such things doth not more evidently shew the greatness of the power of grace in them than would otherwise appear. Thus, when JESUS CHRIST shewed himself among the Jews, they discovered more clearly the strength of their hatred to him, and his Father. And though at Corinth it was an infelicity to have a disorderly member among them, yet it gave occasion to a more pleasing display of the power of grace; and when the Apostle saw their zeal, revenge, indignation, fear, &c. he said they approved themselves clear in that matter. For as the zeal of the Jews (in building the walls) appeared so much the greater, as their enemies were more busy, and more numerous, that “every one, with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon: and that from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.” For had they fainted in the day of evil, it would have shewed their strength to be small. So when men, beset with many infirmities, do move directly against them all, and come off more than conquerors; they discover some very strong power working within, which beareth down the adverse principle, and moveth them on. That house is firmest, which rains, and floods, and winds cannot overthrow. And that love is strongest, which cannot be quenched. Therefore St. Paul will glory in his infirmities, that the power of *Christ* may rest upon him.

John xv. 24

2 Cor. vii. 11

Neh. iv. 17-21

Prov. xxiv. 10

Eph. i. 19

Mat. vii. 25

Can. viii. 7

2 Cor. xii. 9

The text paraphrased, the Apostle himself being supposed to speak:—

THE truths which I have delivered, deserve your severe meditation. But if any one should suppose they give licence to sin, I would have him know I abhor the thought; and wish him farther to consider, whether these truths when cordially received, do not take away even a relish for sin. And if so, how can he, to whose mind sin is become unpleasant, live in the practice of that which does not please?

SECOND PART.

I Come now to what I principally intended from the words, which was to make that use of the objection introduced by the Apostle, of which it might be thought capable. And that I may do this with the greater perspicuity, as it comes now under a more public inspection, I think it not amiss to throw what I have to say into several sections: since that which has a tendency to arrest the mind, is for that reason more likely to profit.

§ 1. Containeth an Introduction to the main Design.

Without controversy, I think I may say, two things do materially concern the hearers of the word of God:—to understand the truth—and to feel its power. Both of which are briefly comprehended in that saying of CHRIST, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” But there are many hearers, who care nothing for such truth, and such freedom. “And of such there were many in old time, whose heart was gross, and whose ears were dull, and whose eyes were closed: so they heard, but did not understand; and saw, but did not perceive.” For as he that looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, and shall be blessed in his deed: so he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

John viii. 32

Acts xxviii.
26—27

James i. 25

2 Pet. i. 9

My design, therefore, is to form out of the text, a *criterion* of true doctrine, and to try the sentiments that go about by that rule. In doing which I would be careful, that the *canon* shall be fairly drawn from the text, and the *doctrines* as fairly tried by the *canon*. Do ye, then, dearly beloved, give me your close attention; for I dare say ye would not embrace a

lie:

lie : and there are some of you who make what ye hear, and what ye receive, a matter of conscience. And in this, ye do perfectly right, because it is your life, and the lengthening of your days ! Surely, they are not wise, who esteem this a light matter, nor do they sufficiently observe, that a belief of the truth, and sanctification of the Spirit, are St. Paul's lovely companions ; and to believe a lie, and to be damned, are joined together by the Apostle. So then, if the truth sanctify us, and set us free ; there is little room to doubt, but error will fetter us, and bind us fast.

2 Theff. ii, 13

2 Theff. ii, 11—12

John xvii, 17
2 Tim. ii, 25—26

And since I have requested your attention to that which may be delivered, so I would wish every one, to attend seriously to the frame of his own heart, whether it stand fair towards godly things ; since there is nothing so important as a right propension of heart in this business. For though a man's abilities were ever so great, “ if he be not turned from his iniquities, he cannot understand the truth.” “ And they who are disobedient, will always stumble at the word.” Most true it is, that corrupt affections will ever fight against the verity of God. Thus “ the uncircumcised in heart will always resist the Holy Ghost.” “ And they who have *pleasure* in unrighteousness, will never believe the truth.” And they who are contentious, will never obey it.

Dan. ix, 13

1 Pet. ii, 8

Acts vii, 51

2 Theff. ii, 13

Rom. ii, 8

What will hinder a disobedient, from being a gainsaying people ? For if the citizens hate their nobleman, they will soon say, “ we will not have this man to reign over us.” So if the heart be rightly turned by the grace of God, the understanding will not be deficient. Wherefore Jesus said, “ If any man will do the will of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” Thus St. Paul pre-supposeth repentance, as necessary to the acknowledging of the truth. For it is the wise

Rom. x, 21

Luke xix, 16

John vii, 17
2 Tim. ii, 25

Prov. x, 8 in heart that receive commandment, while a prating fool shall fall. And St. James saith well, “wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” Now where this is not done, the word will not be mixed with faith in them who hear it.

And the reason of all this is, *quod recipitur per modum recipientis recipitur*. So St. Paul “Spake wisdom among them that were perfect;”—and preached CHRIST crucified unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;—and they that are of God, hear God’s words, and others hear them not because they are not of God;—so none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand;—thus the spiritual man judgeth all things, and the carnal man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God.” Not that the way of truth where profit and practice are concerned, is so very intricate in itself; for it is revealed with such clearness, that one of David’s simple men can find it out; and the path is so even, that a wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. For, as a sound man will walk with tolerable steadiness in a rough path, while a cripple will totter and limp even in Solomon’s porch: so the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but as for transgressors, they shall fall therein.

§ 2. Layeth down a Rule of true Doctrine, and the Reasons of it.

THE general method of judging concerning a truth out of the Scriptures, is by the proportion, or analogy of faith. And this is, when the parts of a doctrine will match with the various parts of Scripture, without offering violence to any them: for then the doctrine is pro-

Rom. xii, 6

αλληλογραφία
της πίστεως

proportionate to the Scriptures, or bears an analogy to them. This method was pursued by those of Berea, who searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. And to this our Lord directed the Jews, ordering them “to search the Scriptures, which testified of him.” This plan is the safest that can be, for it makes men wise unto salvation : but then, it calls for attentive reading, fervent prayer, and great impartiality, that the Scriptures might not be tortured, or forced. For, as it is a happiness rightly to divide the word of truth, so should any wrest the word of God, it will be to their own destruction.

Acts xvii, 11

John v, 39

2 Tim. iii, 15

The Apostle, I think, hath respect to another, where he calleth the Gospel a doctrine according to godliness. Now, in applying this rule, when any one proposition or more are considered, it behoveth us to enquire whether the sentiment will live quietly with sin, and countenance any thing sinful; or shame it, and starve it, and drive it out. And this is a good rule to try, not only if a doctrine be true, but whether we have received it in the love of the truth.

1 Tim. vi, 3

But the following has been proposed by some good men : viz. that doctrine is true, which humbles the sinner, exalts the Saviour, and promotes holiness. And this, indeed, is a good rule for the lowest capacity, nor do I think there is the least danger of its leading any wrong.

I purpose at this time, to state another, which is not much urged, and yet, it may be, is not useless in this affair. Our text furnishes the following rule, which you may take in these words, [That Doctrine is most true which *seems* to favour sin, but yet does most effectually *oppose* it.] But before I proceed to the use of this proposition, it will be proper to explain the terms—and to shew cause why it is formed.

By

By [Sin] I mean a disposition to, and practice of that, which thwarts the law of God, whether expressed or implied in the Scriptures. [To favour] to countenance, to encourage, by furnishing arguments and motives to that which is wrong. [*Seems to favour:*] by this I understand some slight appearance only, whereby those who are not partakers of Christ, are led to form unfavourable conclusions. [Oppose it:] by this I mean, its rooting out sinful inclinations, and forming the mind to take pleasure in all holy things. [Effectually oppose:] that is, such an energy of working, as will end in a compleat conquest of the heart of a fallen creature to God.

Observe, when I say the doctrine effectually opposes sin, my meaning is, that this is its natural tendency; though the effect never takes place without the power of that Spirit who worketh in them that believe.

The proposition so explained will run thus: [that doctrine is most true which *appears* to those, who have no *salutary* knowledge of it, to encourage men to the love and pursuit of sin; but yet does in fact, fully root out the *love*, and suppress the *practice* of sinning.]

The reason of the proposition is to be drawn from the text. That part of it, [viz. that doctrine is true which *seems* to favour sin] has its support in the first verse. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" This I think must be plain enough; for the prevention or objection is either pertinent, or not pertinent; not the last, for it does not comport with a sensible man, much less an inspired writer, to bring in that which is alien from his design. If the first, he must certainly apprehend, that his doctrine *seemed*, in the view of some persons, to quiet and encourage men in sin: because it were trifling, to introduce an objection which no man had made, and which it was
not

not likely any man would have thought of making. But this is not the Apostle's manner, as may be seen in these places: Rom. iii. 1, 31—vi. 15—vii. 7, 13—ix. 19. Now if this be clear, and it be granted, that what the Apostle taught was the truth of God; we have the reason of this part of the rule.

The other part [but yet does effectually oppose sin] is taken from the second verse, where St. Paul, after a hearty deprecation, "God forbid," saith, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Now there cannot be a more sure way of setting aside any practice, than by taking away the pleasure that attends it. For, "when the daughters of music are brought low, a man will not be forward to chaunt to the sound of the viol." While men have pleasure in unrighteousness, they will pursue unrighteousness: but when they favour the things of God, they will exercise themselves unto godliness. "So if the inclination of the heart be unto God's testimonies, it will be turned from covetousness." But what these persons were in their disposition, was to be ascribed *organice* to the doctrine of the Apostle. So in verse 17, they are said to have "obeyed that form of doctrine which was delivered to them." "The word God, (saith St. Paul) worketh effectually in them that believe." And this is its regular tendency wherever it becomes an engrafted word; for it brought forth fruit in the Colossians, and in all the world, from the time they heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth. If men would escape the pollutions of the world, there is nothing like the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. So if any are made spiritually pure; they are clean through the word that is spoken unto them. This must be admitted by all, that true doctrine effectually opposes sin. And by putting these together, we form

Ecccl. xii, 4

Amos vi, 6

Pl. cxix, 36

2 Thes. ii, 13

Col. i, 6

2 Pet. ii, 20

John xv, 3

the proposition, [that doctrine is true which *seems* to favour sin, but yet does effectually *oppose* it.]

§ 3. Stateth the Doctrines to be examined.

THERE is scarce any thing that so much perplexes a young religionist, as the variety of opinions concerning religion, which are found among professing people. The Apostle calleth them “divers and strange doctrines;” and their power on the mind of men is very great. Therefore the Apostle compareth that power—to a tempest, “be no more children tossed to and fro;”—to a whirlwind, “be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.” And from these two actions, dizziness and distress usually arise. So St. Paul when he describes such an one, he says, “He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting [*νοσων, insaniens*, out of his senses; or *languens*, sick] about questions.” At sight of this, a young convert is cast down. He would hear the voice of the good Shepherd, but fears to be deceived by the voice of strangers. Christ, it is true, is his object, but to understand aright is his task. There are three things that greatly befriended a regenerate person in this dilemma—Election of Grace—Grace of Election—a disposition to do the Will of God. So he shall “ask, and it shall be given unto him; he shall seek, and find; for God will guide the meek in judgment, the meek will he teach his way.” Every one that desires to be taught of God, shall attain his true end, for God giveth wisdom liberally, and upbraideth not.

And yet, in that article of Theology, to which my attention is directed, I can find in all the world but two opinions; and these are

Heb. xiii, 9

Eph. iv. 14
Acts xxvii. 18

Eph. iv, 14
Heb. xiii, 9

1 Tim. vi, 4

Mat. xxiv, 24
Rom. xi, 7
Heb. xiii, 9
John vii, 17

Pf. xxv, 9

James i, 5

commonly known by the doctrine of works, and the doctrine of grace. My business is to lay down both, and try the merits of each, by the rule which I have formed. And this I would the rather do, because there be some doctrine which God hates, and so should we; and “before we can hold fast that which is good, we must prove all.” Rev. ii. 6.
1 Thes. v.

And first, what I mean by the doctrine of works, take in the following words, [viz. That men, by performing their duty to God and man, become acceptable to God in this life, and sharers of glory in another.] This scheme, indeed, may be set down in different words, and with some addition. There are who will mention the mediation of Christ, and the mercy of God, and faintly add the common assistances of the Holy Spirit: but as these do not all belong to this scheme, they are little insisted upon by those who adopt it. And there are not a few, who have rejected the mediation of Christ, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, entirely from their system. I have expressed what is necessary to explain the doctrine, (for good works are made the material cause of acceptance with God, and final salvation,) and have left those who hold it to agree, or disagree about the circumstantial of it, as they see fit.

The other doctrine may be thus described, [it is the grace of God reigning towards a man in his Justification, and reigning in him to the sanctification of his body, soul, and spirit.] That this may be plain to every one, observe, that under [*Justification*] I comprehend pardon of sins, and the imputation of Christ's righteousness; and by [*Sanctification*] I understand regeneration, which is the beginning, and the progress to the full image of the heavenly, which is its completion; and by [*Grace reigning*
C towards

towards him, and in him] I intend the free favour of God working all in all, and effecting its end, eternal glory; and good works as having no other place here, but as fruits arising from God's favour. These two sentiments have found a place on earth, let us see which came down from heaven.

§ 4. Applyeth the Rule to the first Doctrine.

AT our entrance into this section, which I consider as the most material, and as deserving to be seriously examined, it may be well for us to say, "Lord, open thou our eyes, that we may understand thy law:" that nothing may be delivered but words of truth and soberness, and that what may be delivered, may profit. Attend impartially, kind reader, to the present examination, and try thy own sentiments by it; be not afraid of the light, for he that doeth truth cometh to it, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

John iii. 21.

In the trial now before us, we shall make use of that rule of judgment advanced in the second section. [That doctrine is most true which *seems* to favour sin, but yet does effectually oppose it.] The explication and reasons of which are given in that section. The doctrine first to be examined is this, [Men, by performing their duty to God and man, become acceptable to God in this life, and sharers of glory in another.]

Now in comparing this doctrine to the above rule, I am led, in favour of the opinion, (if it be so taken) and them who advance it to others, first to make a CONCESSION.

I grant

I grant, yes, I grant freely, that this opinion does not *seem* at all to favour sin : it does not *seem* to furnish any arguments, or motives to that which is sinful. For suppose we heard a Minister, after he had explained the duties of his hearers, towards God and man, address the auditors in this manner : “ My dear hearers, I have set before you Life and Death ; now, if ye would escape eternal misery, and obtain everlasting happiness, above all things, be found in the practice of those duties which are enjoined upon you. Ye cannot obtain the favour of God, and a place in glory, but by performing those duties. Therefore, as ye love your souls, be diligent in all such duties as ye owe to God and Man.” I say, if we should hear a Minister speak in such a strain as this, sure there is no man who would suppose, that the doctrine he delivered *seemed* at all to favour sin. No one, surely, would think of objecting to him, What ! shall we continue in sin that Grace may abound ? This would be perfectly unnatural, and without doubt he must be acquitted of *seeming* to favour sin in the least.—This, then, is the concession :

At tuum, benignissime Lector, pedem siste.—Pause !

This doctrine seems comely, what a pity it should be corrupt : it seems lovely to the eye, and a fruit to be desired to make one wise, Rom. vii. 10. when, unhappily, it is only calculated to administer death to its admirers.

Yes, strange as it may appear, this seemingly fair feature in this doctrine, is nothing but a foul blot upon it. And fair as it appears, *prima facie*, it is but of earth, and that wisdom which is from beneath.

We draw out the Rule, and compare :

Rule—That doctrine is true which *seems* to
favour sin,

But this doctrine does not *seem* to favour sin,

Ergo, This doctrine is not true.

Or you may take it thus :

The objection in the text appeared to lie against
St. Paul's doctrine ;

But the objection in the text does not appear
to lie against this.

Ergo, This is not the doctrine of St. Paul.

I do not doubt but the preachers of this doctrine, applaud themselves not a little in this, that their doctrine is almost the only one which does not lead to licentiousness. I will look into that presently. In the mean time, it behoves both its preachers and hearers to consider, whether what they have taken to be its excellency, be not a proof of its error : then, if the light which is in it be darkness, how great is its darkness !—

In looking farther into this doctrine, I am led
next to a CRIMINATION.

I affirm, that the doctrine before us, doth greatly serve the cause of sin. For proof of this, though I might wish you to listen to the sentiments of those, who frequent places of pleasure, riot, and folly, and live without piety, sobriety, and God in the world, as a proof that there is a probability of truth in the charge I have advanced. Yet I am not inclined to violate that rule, “ *Est affirmantis probare*,” or to fly back from the charge. And since the crime of which I have supposed it guilty is of so high a nature, it should not
lightly

lightly be passed by. I will therefore endeavour to prove it; and the reasons in general are two.

FIRST REASON,

That which weakens the force of the law of
God, serves the cause of sin,
But this doctrine weakens the force of the law
of God,
Ergo, It serves the cause of sin.

To make this plain to the reader, two questions should be proposed:—Does this doctrine weaken the force of the law of God?—And if so, does it for that reason serve the cause of sin? On the first of these it may be said, that this is not likely; for if any person say [Men are accepted of God in this life, and share of glory in another, by performing their duty to God and Man,] and press this on his hearers, he seems rather to magnify the law than weaken its force. It is granted, he may seem to do this. But if he were asked, do you, by the law, which directs our duty to God and Man, understand that rule in the Scriptures which is holy, and just, and good, and spiritual; reaching to the thoughts and motions of the heart, and to the words and actions of the life? He certainly would say, Oh, no! For God, through Christ, calls for a sincere obedience, not a perfect one. For if he demanded a perfect obedience, it were inconsistent with our frail nature. He hath given us a new law, more lenient, and so more compatible to our present weakness. I suppose he must answer in such a way as this, if at all. For should he say that no alteration has taken place in the law, but it still remains a perfect rule of righteousness, and binds to universal obedience, and condemns every defect, then the doctrine

Rom. vii. 12.

doctrine would surely fall : for no flesh living could be justified in the sight of God. But what need I say this ? Are not the sermons and books of such persons sufficiently replete with a milder law—a remedial law—a new law—easier terms—sincere obedience, and the like ? For as they of old time, who held this doctrine, made void the law of God, even so it is now. And it will be found true, that they who desire to be under the law, do not care much to hear what it says.

Gal. iv. 21.

Secondly, If so, does it serve the cause of sin ? I answer it does, and that to a very high degree. It deserves to be considered, whether the moving of the boundaries of God's holy law, be not in itself one of the most daring crimes against the Majesty of Heaven, that can possibly be conceived by the heart of man. For if that man were deemed guilty of a great offence, who only moved a landmark, which divided a few acres of earth ; how guilty must he be, who bends, and forces the high decree of Heaven ? And though such should profess themselves worshippers of God ; without doubt their worship must needs be vain, while they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, making void the law of God by their traditions. And if CHRIST JESUS our Lord affirm, that one jot, or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled, it is impossible to say, how high a crime he is guilty of, who acts so bold a part against the law of God.

Deut. xxviii.
17.

Mark vii. 7.

Mat. v. 18.

Moreover, we consider this violence upon the law of God, as opening the way to all other sins. The pure law of God has two uses,—to prevent sin—and to convince of it. In the first, it is a light which makes manifest what is right, and what is wrong. I had not known lust, except the law had said, “ thou shalt

shalt not covet ;” and, “ children obey your parents in the Lord ; for this is right.” In the other use, it is a candle of God, searching and laying open the conscience and conduct of men : “ for, by the law is the knowledge of sin,” and sin, by the commandment, became “ exceeding sinful.” But if the law be relaxed, or abated in its force, these two uses of it are gone at once, sin may freely conceive and bring forth without restraint. Thus no man is checked in sinning, nor condemned, and humbled for sin ; but on the contrary, continues prophane and proud, careless in committing sin, and callous when ’tis committed.

Of this the Scriptures furnish an instance. The law concerning the duty of children to parents, was by the Pharisees melted down to a corban (a gift,) and what followed but this ; “ Ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or mother.” But they nibbled at other parts as well as this,—and then what were they all ? Why even such as we might have expected—putrid sepulchres—high flown hypocrites—ravenous religionists—fair in appearance, but foul as fiends. For, if the law of God be moulded to fit the sincerity of man ; what will hinder, but that every man will shape it to his own. And since the law must give way to human weakness, it will be much more pleasant to every man, to make it fit himself, than to be directed by its holy rules, or wounded by its stings, or humbled by its sentence. None sin more freely than those, who think God like themselves ; and surely they think thus, who suppose, that God has given them a law to humour their depravity. Now, if 1000 men, should put the law into a thousand shapes ; will they not indulge their lusts, and enlarge their

Rom. vii. 7.
Eph. vi. 1, 2.

Rom. iii. 20.

Rom. vii. 13.

Jam. i. 15.

Mark vii. 11,
12.

Mat. v.

Pf. l. 21.

their licentiousness? “ For so on a time, when there was no king in Israel, every man did
Judges **xxi.** 25 that which was right in his own eyes.”

SECOND REASON.

That doctrine which taketh away the spring to a holy life, serves the cause of sin ;

But this doctrine takes away the spring to a holy life ;

Ergo, It serves the cause of sin.

There is but one question to be handled here, and that is, Doth this doctrine take away the spring to a holy life? For if it do, there can be no doubt but it serves the cause of sin. By taking away the spring to a holy life, I mean only its contrariety to it. The principal spring to a holy life, is the *SPIRIT* of GOD; so all Goodness is said to be “ his fruit.” For as the Body without the Spirit is dead ; so the Soul without the Spirit of God, is dead also. Since they who have not the Spirit of God are carnal ; and they who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Eph. v. 9.
Jude xix.
Rom. viii. 8.

But the more sensible incitement to a holy life, is “ the Love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us.” Than which there is not a more benign worker in all nature.—It suffers long and is kind—it rejoiceth in the truth—it bears, believes, and hopes, and never fails. In the cause of God it works and suffers willingly ; for so St. Paul “ was in labours more abundant, and in deaths oft, because the love of Christ constrained him.”

Rom. v.
2 Cor. xiii.
2 Cor. xi.

But now this doctrine taketh away the spring to a holy life, while it employs men in making terms, and conditions, and bartering with God
for

for his glory. And this is the manner of it, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life? and what lack I yet?" and he willing to justify himself, said, "and who is my neighbour?" Now, if a person be in earnest in this, (as very few are so) then, if he apprehend himself deficient, he is thrown into anxiety; "all these have I kept, but what lack I yet?" But should the conditions appear too high, he is utterly cast down. "He was sad at that saying, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." But if he seem to himself to have performed these conditions, he will vaunt himself not a little, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men." For boasting will never be excluded by the law of works, 'tis only Grace and Faith can cast it out.

Mark x. 22.

Rom. iii.
Ep. ii. 9.

But where all this while is the Love of God, the Spring of Holiness? For, as of old, a "great and strong wind rent the mountains, but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake." So here, there is anxiety, but the love of God is not in the anxiety: here is sorrow, but the love of God is not in the sorrow: so likewise there is vaunting, but the love of God is not there. If this doctrine take away the spring to holiness, it will certainly favour and strengthen the cause of sin. Wherefore did the Jews reject Christ, and receive honour one of another, but "because the love of God was not in them?" It is a sense of God's free salvation on our hearts, that teaches to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this world. Now the doctrine before us opposeth all this, and so takes away the spring to a holy life. For as the love of God is the only spring to piety, and no one ever was holy without it;

1 Kings, xix.
11.

John v. 42,
&c.

Tit, ii. 11, 12.

Prov. xxvi. 20 “ so what tenet soever opposes this, leadeth to sin, for where no wood is, there the fire goeth out.”

This doctrine therefore is false in all its features. True doctrine *seems* to favour sin, but yet does effectually *oppose* it. But this doctrine does not *seem* to favour sin in the least ; yet does in truth fully serve its cause. Nor is it a strange thing, that sin should be encouraged by it ; for if the rule of holiness be stripped of its force, and the spring of holiness be taken away ; how shall it be regulated, or how is it ever to rise ? And since this doctrine is embraced by so many, it is no wonder that so little piety, and sobriety, and honesty, is found in the world. Many suppose that the way to be holy is to be alive to the law, and to expect glory for our duties ; for if that man will not be holy who expects to go to Heaven for his good works, who will ? And yet no one more unlikely to be holy than he. For, as the Romans were dead to the law, and married to another, “ to bring forth fruit unto God ;” and the Apostle, through the law was dead to the law, that he might live unto God : so they who are alive unto the law, are not married to Christ ; and have neither fruit nor life towards God.

And now after trial had, I fairly turn this doctrine aside, as wanting in it all the features of truth. It is indeed fair without, to slight observance ; but foul within and full of rottenness. What pity, that this doctrine should have the highest seat in the synagogues ; and chief rooms at feasts, and greetings in the market-places ; whereas it should begin with shame to take the lowest room ; nay, indeed it should have no room at all, but be cast to the owls and the bats, into the land of darkness, where it has its birth, and never be admitted into the
assem-

Rom. vii. 4.

Gal. ii, 19.

Rom, x. 3.

assemblies of the Saints, who are the faithful in Christ Jesus.

§ 5. Applieth the Rule to the other Doctrine.

WHEN Joseph found not his brethren in Shechem, he wandered a while in the field, and then went down to Dotham. When the spouse missed the flock of Christ, she wished to know where they fed, and enjoyed their rest at noon. So we, after examining the current doctrine of the day, and seeing it is not that which should come, cheerfully look for another. We lift up our feet, and ponder our path, and under the protection of a sure promise, follow the pillar and cloud. “If thou seek for her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” So the wise men, when they found not Christ in Jerusalem, followed the star into Bethlehem. Prov. ii, 4, 5.

Our work here will be but short, all we wish is, that it may be sure. The doctrine now to be examined is this, [the Grace of God reigns towards a man in his justification, and reigns in him, to his sanctification in body, soul, and spirit.] The rule by which it is to be tried the same as before.

This proposition says, that [Grace reigns towards a man in his justification.] Now suppose a Minister while addressing his auditors, should say, “My brethren, I come to you with good news from Heaven, and inform you, that Justification by the Grace of God, through the imputation of the obedience of Christ, will place a man in as safe and honourable a state, as if he had always obeyed the law of God, and had

never sinned. And this is expressed by our being compleat in Christ, and accepted in the beloved." And the whole of this is brought about independent of good works already done, or to be done by you in time to come. Inasmuch, that good works have no part at all either in the material, or procuring cause of this justification; for if it be of grace, then

Rom. xi. 6.

Dei gratia non erit gratia ullo modo, nisi omni modo gratuita fuerit. AUGUSTINUS.

If a Minister should speak thus, will not some be ready to say, this doctrine don't look favourably upon morality, but makes good works little better than cyphers: for if they have no part in so great an article of religion, our justification before God, we may as well remain in sin. And most assuredly, when this proposition is fully asserted, such thoughts do arise in the minds of men. And therefore those persons who advance it, are always compelled to take notice of such objections. Yea, how many sharp arrows of the mighty have been thrown at this sentiment? What bitter words have been used to run it down, under that very notion, of its furnishing motives to sin?

And yet, after all, this very blot (as they suppose) is a noble badge of its truth. So when a man imagines, that he hath a vast advantage against it, when he is able to say that good works *seem* so much slighted, and sin *seems* so much encouraged, that the doctrine itself must be false; he doth, without any design of his, by that very means prove it to be true. For,

That doctrine is true which *seems* to favour sin,
But the doctrine before us *seems* to favour sin.

Ergo, The doctrine before us is true.

Or thus :

The doctrine which tendeth to produce the
objection in the text is true,
But this doctrine tendeth to produce that ob-
jection.

Ergo, This doctrine is true.

The other member of the proposition is this,
[Grace reigns in a man to his sanctification in
body, soul, and spirit.] In this part we have
an effectual force to act against the power, and
practice of sin. For the Apostle infers the non
dominion of sin, from the reigning of Grace ;
“ Sin shall not have dominion, for ye are un- Rom. vi. 14.
der Grace.” The same Apostle, to shew the
nature of Grace, ascribeth to it riches, and suf- Ep. i. 7.
ficiency ; and to express its manner of work- 2 Cor. xii. 9.
ing, he says, “ It teacheth to deny all ungod- Tit. ii. 12.
liness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly,
and righteously, and godly in this world.”—
The true receivers of this doctrine are under
no temptation to take away the force of the
law of God, for Christ is to them the end of
the law for righteousness : nor to depress the
spring to a holy life, for that spring is Grace,
or the love of God shed abroad in their hearts
by the Holy Ghost. and the more entirely a
man sees himself saved by Grace, the more en-
tirely he will love God, “ for he who hath Luke vii. 47.
much forgiven, the same loveth much.”—
Take the sum of the whole in the following ar-
gument, and judge for yourself, viz.

That doctrine is true which *seems* to favour sin,
but yet does effectually *oppose* it.

But this doctrine *seems* to favour sin, yet does
effectually *oppose* it.

Ergo, This doctrine is most true.

But

But for as much as true doctrine cannot favour sin at all, how comes it pass that it seems to do so? There are two reasons: first, the want of proper attention, when persons who hear a sermon, very often gather up a part only, and force it beyond its proper intendment: or, secondly, the want of knowing the force of a doctrine, when it is received in love; for we are unable to say, how powerful a doctrine may be in practice, which we have only been exercised about in theory. And therefore we err not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

But this high and holy doctrine is a royal bounty from Heaven, and a balm for a broken heart. It raises, and aggrandises every sinner who receives it. For “blessed are they that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.” From the different aspects with which men view it, it appears to some as a deceiver, to others as true; to some as unknown, to others as well known; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.

§ 6. Containeth the Conclusion of the Whole.

IT is easy to see what sentiment is most likely to produce and promote morality among men. And herein is a marvelous thing, that “the very doctrine which men deem the most unfriendly to good morals, should be that which alone can produce them.” When that sentiment, which most think will make men moral, does indeed carry the bane of morality in its very contexture, “Thus the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”—I have, therefore

fore ventured to assault that Doctrine which makes Salvation to be of works; I have carried arms into its Camp, and heaped a black crimination upon it; that the light of the Glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ might shine unto us.

In religion there are two things—to know the Sect 1. truth—and to feel its power.—The truth is, [that grace reigns towards a man, to his justification, and in him, to his sanctification in body, soul, and spirit.] And though it is not common to seek the power, before we know the truth; there may be many who may know it in word, but not in power, nor in the Holy Ghost, and much assurance. But who are likely 1 Thess. i. 5. to receive this truth, in the power and sweetness of it? I answer, They are the *persons*, who are full willing to part with their burden, and bondage at once. The burden, i. e. the guilt of sin pressing the conscience; the bondage, i. e. the governing power of it, as it disposeth a man to take pleasure in sin. For, food cannot be more sweet to the famishing, or balm more grateful to the bruised; than this doctrine is to those, who are weary of their burden, and hate their bondage. Indeed it is not every man, that will receive this doctrine, as it ought to be received, for he that doth this, is both born, and Mat. xi. 28. taught of God. John i. 13.
John vi. 45.

They who are in the happy possession of the truth as it is in Christ, will experience it to be a dignity, and a defence unto them. They shall be Kings and Priests unto God, and shall reign with him for ever. Or as Solomon elegantly, “Wisdom is the principal thing—exalt her, and She shall promote thee: She shall bring thee to honour when thou doth embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: A Crown of Glory, shall She deliver to Prov. iv. 7. 8. thee. When thou goest thy steps shall not be 12. straitened:

straitened : and when thou runnest thou shalt not stumble."

So great is the dignity and defence of a man in Christ ! Go then, gentle reader cleave to the truth as it is in Jesus, (if thou hast it,) since it is of all companions the most pleasant and profitable, "For when thou goest, it shall lead thee; Prov. vi. 22. when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee ; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.



